

Guidelines and Definitions for Natural Areas & Wild Areas

Bureau of Forestry

Natural Areas

Natural Areas Objective and Definition

The objective of a natural area is to protect areas of scenic, historic, geologic or ecological significance, which will remain in an undisturbed state, with development and maintenance being limited to that required for health and safety. Natural areas are set aside to provide locations for scientific observation of natural systems, to protect examples of typical and unique plant and animal communities, and to protect outstanding examples of natural interest and beauty. Natural areas are maintained in a natural condition by allowing physical and biological processes to operate, usually without direct human intervention. Any unique or unusual biologic, geologic or historic areas can be considered for designation as natural areas. In addition to the 'unique' or 'unusual,' representative examples of all major forest types occurring in this Commonwealth were also included in the proposed natural area system. The size of these areas is generally small but may be as large as several thousand acres.

Natural Area Selection and Designation

Areas recommended for natural area designation should be submitted to the State Forester by the District Forester along with a map and a complete documentation describing the character of the area. In the original selection process, natural area status was considered when advisable whenever other resource development would have an adverse effect on the future utility or value of the area. Final approval and official designation as a natural area is by publication in the Pennsylvania Bulletin with public comment.

Natural Area Management Guidelines

Natural areas are left undisturbed with natural succession allowed to occur. Intervention is only permitted when direct human activities or events threaten its natural value. The state forester must approve any management or requested activity on natural areas that will result in some form of disturbance. A State Forest Environmental Review (SFER) must be submitted for these activities.

The numbered guidelines below are from 17 Pa. Code § 27.3. The sub-bullets represent the bureau's implementation and operational strategy to address the mandated guidelines.

§ 27.3 1) HUMAN HABITATION WILL NOT BE PERMITTED, EXCEPT THAT PRIMITIVE TYPE, BACKPACK CAMPING MAY BE PERMITTED IN DESIGNATED AREAS ONLY.

- Existing Forest Camp leases are permitted to remain in Natural Areas.
 - If a cabin on a Forest Camp Lease is destroyed by fire, storm, flood or other natural causes the lease will be relocated to a site outside of the Natural Area or terminated according to the wishes of the lessee.
 - Overnight camping is limited to the backpack primitive type.
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§ 27.3 2) ACCESS FOR ALL BUT ESSENTIAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES WILL BE RESTRICTED TO FOOT TRAILS.

- Unless otherwise designated, access for all but essential administrative activities is restricted to foot travel and non-motorized watercraft.
 - Horseback riding and mobility devices for handicapped persons may be permitted on designated trails.
 - Hunting and fishing are permitted in natural areas following normal operating procedures of the bureau, unless otherwise posted.
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§ 27.3 3) BUILDINGS AND OTHER IMPROVEMENTS WILL BE RESTRICTED TO THE MINIMUM REQUIRED FOR PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY AND INTERPRETIVE AIDS.

- Signs are to be erected at access points and where needed along roads bordering natural areas. Signs should indicate the name of the natural area, why the area was set aside and any special restrictions which apply.
 - The bureau and the Pennsylvania Fish Commission have designated certain natural areas as protection areas for reptiles and amphibians. Signs will be maintained stating that the taking, catching, killing or possession of any reptile or amphibian within the area is prohibited.
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§ 27.3 4) TIMBER HARVESTING WILL NOT BE PERMITTED EXCEPT AS MAY BE REQUIRED FOR MAINTENANCE OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY.

- An SFER must be completed for any tree cutting.
 - No artificial regeneration is permitted in natural areas.
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§ 27.3 5) RIGHTS-OF-WAY, LEASES AND MINERAL DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PROHIBITED; PROVIDED, HOWEVER, THAT SUBSURFACE OIL AND GAS RIGHTS MAY BE LEASED WHERE NO SURFACE USE OR DISTURBANCE OF ANY KIND WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE NATURAL AREA.

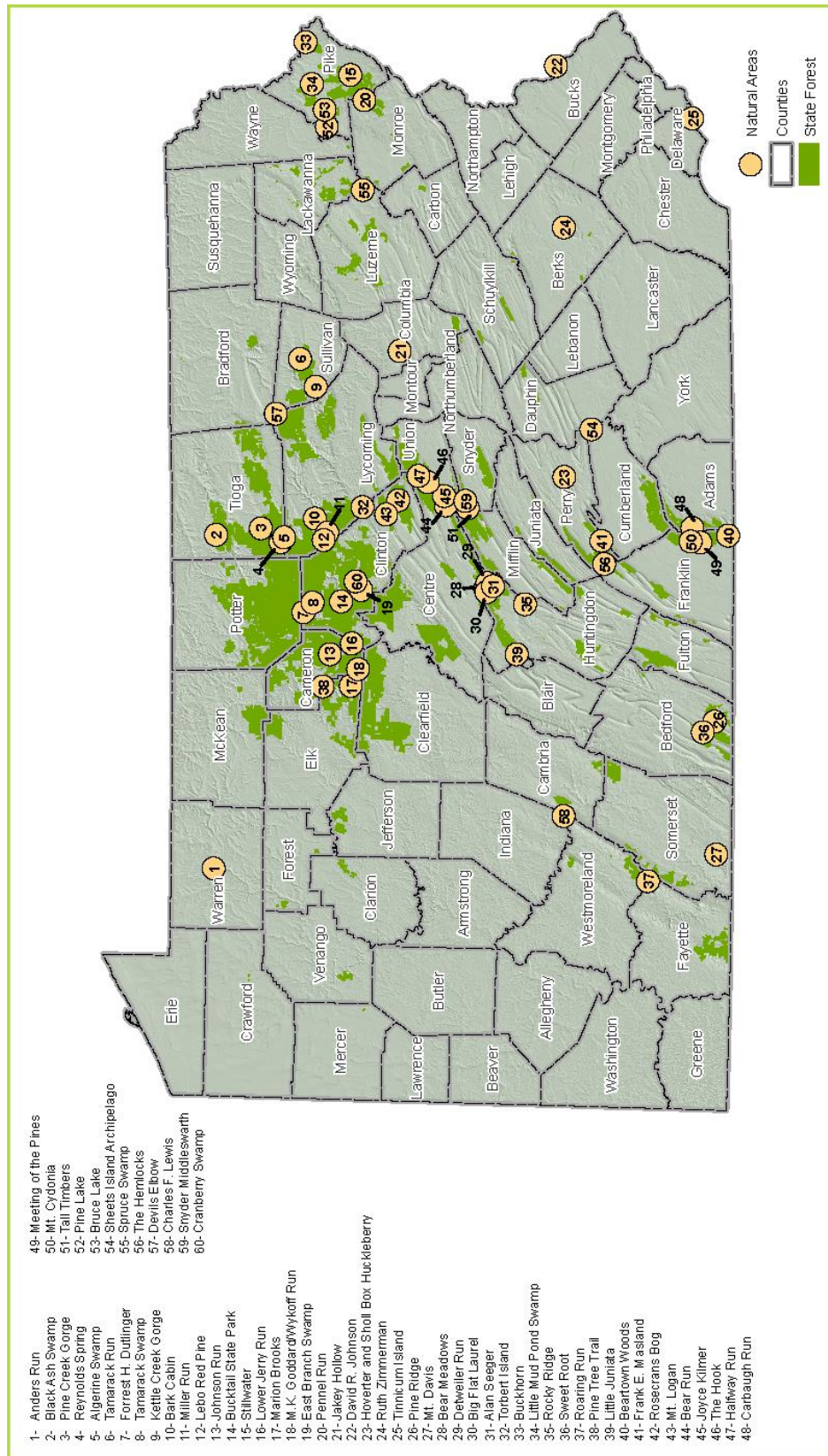
- New rights-of-way are prohibited except for designated utility corridors in the Bucktail Natural Area.

- Existing right-of-way expansion will be considered on an individual case basis. Expansion approval will be considered when the project will not harm the feature for which the area was designated and is justified as the alternative that will result in the least overall ecological damage to state forest lands. A proposed right-of-way expansion requires state forester approval via a State Forest Environmental Review (SFER).
- Leases and mineral development are prohibited; however, subsurface oil and gas rights may be leased where no surface use or disturbance of any kind will take place on the natural area.
- Aerial spraying of herbicides to maintain rights-of-way within and bordering natural areas is prohibited. Vegetation on these rights-of-way may be cut and controlled by direct spray application to cut stems.

Miscellaneous Implementation Guidelines:

- A 600-foot wide management buffer will be maintained around Natural Areas except when a road, pipeline or power line serves as a boundary, in which case a 300 foot wide buffer will apply.
- Insect and disease control are assessed on an individual case basis. Control measures will be considered if the feature for which the area was designated is in jeopardy. These treatments require state forester approval via a State Forest Environmental Review (SFER).
- Fire control is permitted as per normal operating procedures of the Bureau of Forestry.

Natural Area Locations



District	Natural Area Acres	Proposed Natural Area Acres
Forest District 1, Michaux	1,647	0
Forest District 2, Buchanan	2,109	0
Forest District 3, Tuscarora	1,366	0
Forest District 4, Forbes	4,130	0
Forest District 5, Rothrock	2,714	0
Forest District 6, Gallitzin	392	0
Forest District 7, Bald Eagle	7,442	0
Forest District 8, Clear Creek	0	0
Forest District 9, Moshannon	900	0
Forest District 10, Sproul	16,048	0
Forest District 11, Pinchot	70	0
Forest District 12, Tiadaghton	5,315	0
Forest District 13, Elk	11,822	0
Forest District 14, Cornplanter	99	0
Forest District 15, Susquehannock	1,654	0
Forest District 16, Tioga	14,518	0
Forest District 17, William Penn	169	0
Forest District 18, Weiser	115	0
Forest District 19, Delaware	6,733	0
Forest District 20, Loyalsock	1,357	0
Total Natural Area Acres	78,600	0

Wild Areas

Wild Areas Objective and Definition

The objective of wild areas is to set aside certain areas of land where development or disturbance of permanent nature will be prohibited, thereby preserving the wild character of the area. In Pennsylvania's state forest system, certain areas that retain an undeveloped, wild character are designated as Wild Areas to assure that this primitive character is perpetuated. A wild area is defined as an extensive area which the general public will be permitted to see, use and enjoy for such activities as hiking, hunting, fishing, and the pursuit of peace and solitude. Development of a permanent nature will not be permitted so as to retain the undeveloped character of the area. Because of the restrictions imposed on wild areas, careful consideration must be given to alternative uses before additional areas are so designated. The size of the area should be no less than 3,000 acres and seldom more than 15,000 acres. They should be located where there are few public roads or other human-made developments such as campsites, rights-of-way, etc. Only areas where the department owns sufficient subsurface rights to preclude development will be considered.

Wild Area Selection and Designation

Areas that meet standards of the wild area designation can be recommended as additional wild areas by the District Forester to the State Forester for consideration. The recommendation should include a map of the proposed area along with documentation describing the current resource use of the area and the need for an additional wild area. Final approval and official designation as a wild area is by publication in the Pennsylvania Bulletin with public comment.

Wild Area Management Guidelines

Management of wild areas is aimed at preserving the wild or undeveloped character of the area. Land use within the area is restricted to uses that will not have a permanent or long- range effect. Certain management activities in these areas require approval from the state forester via a State Forest Environmental Review (SFER) for the project (see guidelines below).

The numbered guidelines below are from 17 Pa. Code § 27.4. The sub-bullets represent the bureau's implementation and operational strategy to address the mandated guidelines.

§ 27.4 1) CAMPSITE LEASES WILL BE PROHIBITED.

- New campsite leases are prohibited.
- Existing forest camp leases are permitted to remain in Wild Areas.
- If a cabin on a camp lease is destroyed by fire, storm, flood or other natural causes the lease will be relocated to a site outside of the Wild Area or terminated according to the wishes of the lessee.

§ 27.4 2) A NEW PUBLIC ACCESS ROAD WILL NOT BE CONSTRUCTED. EXISTING ROADS WILL REMAIN OPEN ONLY WHERE THERE IS A PUBLIC NEED. ALL MOTORIZED CONVEYANCES OR VEHICLES WILL BE PROHIBITED WITH THE EXCEPTION OF LICENSED VEHICLES WHICH MAY OPERATE ON PUBLIC ROADS.

§ 27.4 3) FOREST TRAIL USE WILL BE RESTRICTED TO HIKING, HORSEBACK RIDING AND BICYCLING.

- Existing drivable trails are closed to public motorized travel.
 - Off-road motorized vehicles such as snowmobiles, trail bikes and ATVs are not permitted anywhere on the area.
 - Foot trail, cross-country ski trail, bridle trail, bicycle trail and handicapped trail construction is permitted.
 - Handicapped persons with mobility devices may operate such conveyances on designated trails.
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§ 27.4 4) BUILDINGS AND OTHER IMPROVEMENTS WILL BE RESTRICTED TO THE MINIMUM REQUIRED FOR PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY AND INTERPRETATIVE AIDS.

- Signs will be erected at access points and where needed along roads bordering wild areas. Signs will indicate name of the wild area, the purpose of wild areas, and any special restrictions which apply.
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§ 27.4 5) RIGHTS-OF-WAY, LEASES AND MINERAL DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PROHIBITED; PROVIDED, HOWEVER, THAT SUBSURFACE OIL AND GAS RIGHTS MAY BE LEASED WHERE NO SURFACE USE OR DISTURBANCE OF ANY KIND WILL TAKE PLACE ON THE WILD AREA.

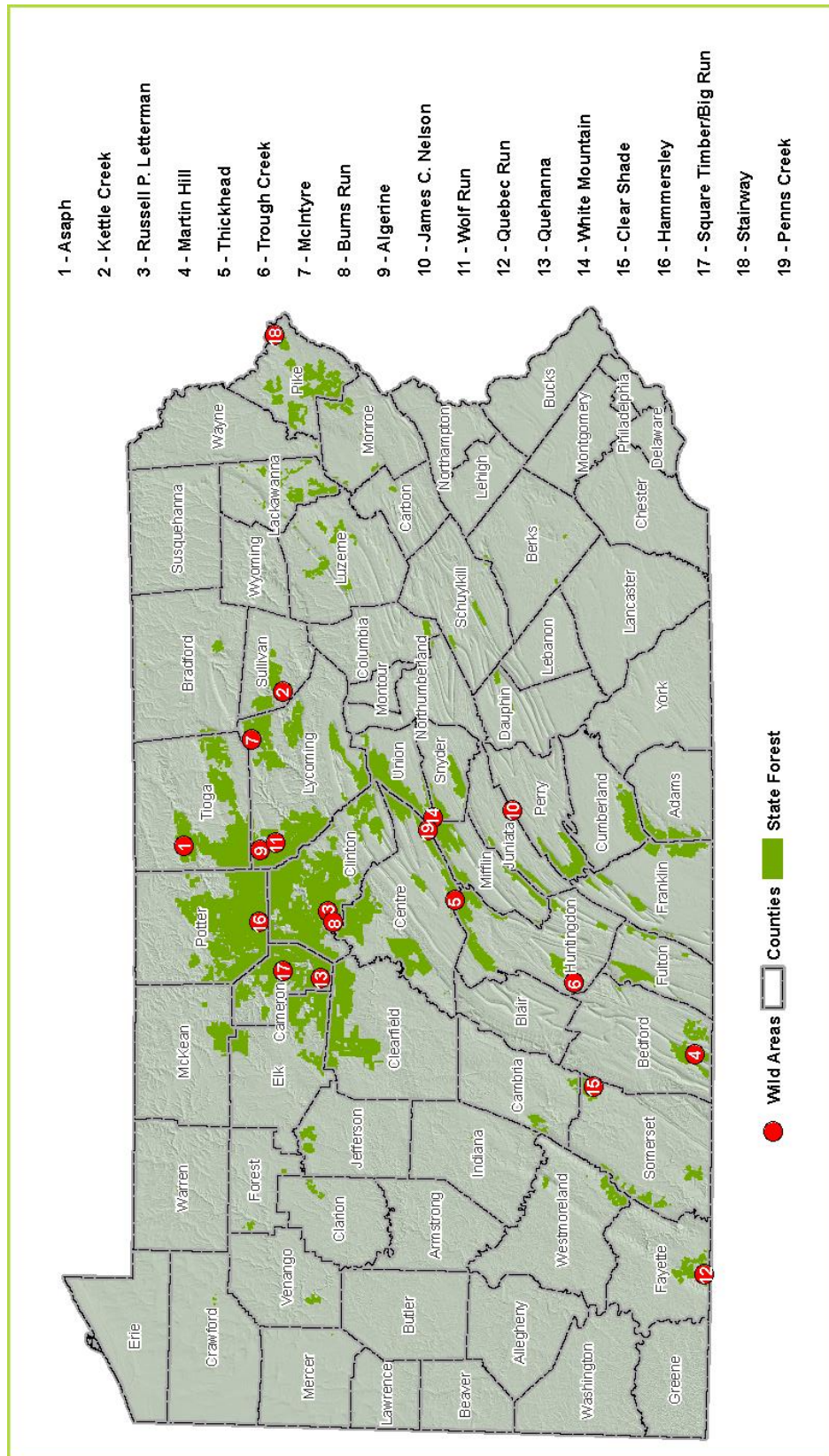
- Existing right-of-way expansion will be considered on an individual case basis. Expansion approval will be considered when justified as the alternative that will result in the least overall ecological damage. A proposed right-of-way expansion requires state forester approval via a State Forest Environmental Review (SFER).
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§ 27.4 6) OVERNIGHT CAMPING WILL BE LIMITED TO THE BACKPACK PRIMITIVE TYPE.

Miscellaneous Implementation Guidelines:

- Hunting and fishing are permitted in Wild Areas following normal operating procedures of the bureau, unless otherwise posted.
- Fire control, insect and disease control, and use of herbicides within wild areas are permitted as per normal operating procedures of the Bureau of Forestry.
- Timber management in wild areas is prohibited unless approved by the State Forester following a State Forest Environmental Review (SFER).
- When artificial regeneration is considered in a wild area, the maintenance of endemic genotypes of native species should be encouraged through the use of local seed sources. Wild areas should be considered gene pools where endemic species and genotypes can interact and evolve with changing environmental stresses. The resulting species types can provide a reservoir of valuable genotypes for future incorporation into breeding programs. The introduction of exotic species and genotypes, which might change the character of the area, is discouraged. See genetic diversity guidelines.
- Because of the diversity of areas designated as wild areas, specific guidelines will be written for each area.

Wild Area Locations



District	Wild Area Acres	Proposed Wild Area Acres
Forest District 1, Michaux	0	0
Forest District 2, Buchanan	11,676	0
Forest District 3, Tuscarora	5,345	0
Forest District 4, Forbes	6,094	0
Forest District 5, Rothrock	5,881	0
Forest District 6, Gallitzin	2,764	0
Forest District 7, Bald Eagle	6,285	0
Forest District 8, Clear Creek	0	0
Forest District 9, Moshannon	24,240	4,378
Forest District 10, Sproul	7,509	0
Forest District 11, Pinchot	0	0
Forest District 12, Tiadaghton	11,703	0
Forest District 13, Elk	26,932	4,689
Forest District 14, Cornplanter	0	0
Forest District 15, Susquehannock	29,836	0
Forest District 16, Tioga	2,783	0
Forest District 17, William Penn	0	0
Forest District 18, Weiser	0	0
Forest District 19, Delaware	2,706	0
Forest District 20, Loyalsock	9,162	0
Total Wild Area Acres	152,916	9,067